

FIREBOAT EDWARD M. COTTER

(W.S. GRATTAN)

(FIREFIGHTER)

(Engine 20)

Moored on the Buffalo River at 155 Ohio Street

Buffalo

Erie

New York

HAER NY-345

NY-345

PHOTOGRAPHS

PAPER COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

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FIREBOAT EDWARD M. COTTER (W.S. GRATTAN) (FIREFIGHTER) (Engine 20)

HAER No. NY-345

Location: Moored on the Buffalo River at 155 Ohio Street, Buffalo, Erie County, New York

Significance: According to the National Historic Landmark nomination, Fireboat EDWARD M. COTTER has the distinction of being not only the oldest operating fireboat on the Great Lakes, but also in the United States.¹

Description: Fireboat EDWARD M. COTTER measures 118' long with a 24' beam and 7.1' draft. The deckhouse occupies most of the main deck and contains an observation room, galley, bunkroom, head and upper engine room. The oil furnace, a small boiler, and a tank containing the foam used in firefighting operations are located in the upper engine room. Adjacent to this is the hose room. The pilothouse is located on top of the deckhouse at the fore, followed by two funnels, and a monitor on a hydraulic platform. There are four other monitors; two are located on the main deck, forward of the deckhouse, one is located on top of the pilothouse, and the last is on the main deck and aft of the deck house. There are also manifolds with eight connections of varying sizes.

The ship's hull is built of double-riveted plates. The bow is "heavily reinforced...with a projecting stem" for ice breaking operations.² The hull consists of four compartments. Forward is the chain locker and ballast tank, followed by four air tanks. Taking up most of the hull space is the engine room, which holds four Caterpillar D-397 engines, two forward and two aft. The engines are connected to DeLaval pumps. The two forward engines are used for pumping, while the aft engines are used for moving the vessel as well as pumping. Next are two generators and two bilge pumps, followed by the steering gear room.³

History: The Buffalo Fire Department contracted the Crescent Shipyard in Elizabeth, New Jersey, to build a fireboat in 1899. The shipyard completed the fireboat in 1900. It was originally called W.S. GRATTAN, after Buffalo Fire Commissioner William S. Grattan. On July 27, 1928, the fireboat sustained serious damage while battling a blaze on the oil barge CAHILL, which required extensive repairs by the Buffalo Dry Dock Company. The hull, deckhouse, engines, and pumps were left intact, but the "the pilothouse was raised to the upper (boat) deck level

¹ James Delgado, "EDWARD M. COTTER," National Historic Landmark Nomination, January 27, 1989, p. 8.

² Delgado, "EDWARD M. COTTER," p. 4.

³ Delgado, "EDWARD M. COTTER," pp. 5-7.

and an elevated, cross-braced steel ‘turret tower’ was installed at the aft end of the upper deck.”⁴ In addition, a new monitor was placed on the pilothouse, while another was put on the turret tower. The ship was also converted from coal to oil.

Further work was done on the ship in 1953 when it became apparent that the engines needed to be replaced. The replacement of the original engines (marine steam engines), pumps (from the American Fire Engine Company), and boilers with four Caterpillar D-397 diesel engines and DeLaval centrifugal pumps was done in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. The fireboat re-entered service in 1953 under a new name: FIREFIGHTER. After the death of the president of the Buffalo Fire Fighters Local 282 in 1954, the fireboat was renamed EDWARD M. COTTER in his honor.⁵ Other changes resulting from the 1953 modernization included the removal of the turret tower and relocation of the monitor originally located on the tower at the aft end of the deckhouse. A fifth monitor was also installed. Fireboat EDWARD M. COTTER remains in use by the Buffalo Fire Department and is designated Engine 20.⁶

Sources: James Delgado. “EDWARD M. COTTER,” National Historic Landmark Nomination. January 27, 1989, Listed August 29, 1996.

Historian: Data compiled by Justine Christianson, HAER Historian, September 2009

Project

Information: The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is a long-range program that documents and interprets historically significant engineering sites and structures throughout the United States. HAER is part of Heritage Documentation Programs (Richard O’Connor, Manager), a division of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The HAER Maritime Program is managed by Todd Croteau, HAER Architect. John Tagiuri and Todd Croteau produced the large format photography in 2008.

⁴ Delgado, “EDWARD M. COTTER,” p. 4.

⁵ Delgado, “EDWARD M. COTTER,” pp. 4, 11.

⁶ Delgado, “EDWARD M. COTTER,” pp. 4-5; 10-11.